

# 5 Facility Checklist

If you decide to pursue a community-based living arrangement, there are some steps you can follow to help make the best possible choice. It is a good idea to visit more than one setting to get an idea of what is available in your community so you can make a well-informed decision about which facility will adequately meet your needs. In exploring your choices, it is a good idea to consult the following sources:

- Ask the provider to show you their latest state inspection report and/or their state license.
- Ask for references from former residents or their family members.
- Call the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services for information on any complaints about a long term care facility (1.800.792.9770). Please note, the NJ Department of Community Affairs, Bureau of Rooming and Boarding House Standards is responsible for the inspection and licensure of Boarding Homes. For more information about this type of setting call 609.633.6251 or 609.984.1706.

The following checklist will help as you visit facilities, meet professionals, and assess the appropriateness of each residence.

## Cost & Finances

- ☐ Can you take a copy of the basic rates with you?
- ☐ What is included in the facility's basic package?
- ☐ What does the basic service package cost? What is the cost of additional services?
- ☐ Is there a Contract/Resident Agreement available for review?
- ☐ What are the billing, payment and credit policies of the facility?
- ☐ What is the policy for rate increases? Under what circumstances might fees change and how much notice will be given?
- ☐ Under what circumstances can a Contract/Resident Agreement be terminated? What is the refund policy if a resident leaves before the end of the month?
- ☐ Are there any programs available to help cover the cost of services?
- ☐ Does the facility accept Medicaid funds as a form of payment? Would the facility accept Medicaid in the future if a resident becomes eligible and can no longer pay privately for services?
- ☐ Are residents asked to move if there is a change in health status?
- ☐ Can residents handle their own finances, or should family members or outside party be designated?

## Environment & Location

Take time to look and listen to what is going on in the lobby and other gathering areas. Imagine yourself living there, and think about how you would fit in.

- ☐ Do you like the location and appearance of the facility?
- ☐ Is it close to friends and relatives?
- ☐ Are there shops, a library, post office, a park or other public places within walking distance?  
Is there an outside area to sit or walk?
- ☐ Is public transportation close by?
- ☐ Do residents appear happy and comfortable?
- ☐ Do the residents look like people you, or your loved one would want to live with?
- ☐ Do staff members treat residents with respect and dignity?

## Physical Setting

### COMMON AREAS

- ☐ Is the residence nicely decorated? Does it offer a home-like “look and feel”?
- ☐ Can residents find their way around the facility?
- ☐ Are doorways, hallways and rooms accommodating to wheelchairs and walkers?
- ☐ Are elevators available for those who cannot manage stairs?
- ☐ Are there handrails to help walking in the corridors and in the bathroom? Are there non-skid floors and firm carpets to assist walking?
- ☐ Is the facility clean, free of odors and well heated or cooled?
- ☐ Does the facility have a sprinkler system and clearly marked exits?
- ☐ Is the facility free from obvious hazards?
- ☐ Is there free use of the kitchen? Activity rooms? Toilet facilities? Dining room? Grounds?
- ☐ Can residents smoke?
- ☐ Where and when is the mail delivered and sent out?
- ☐ Is there a secure environment for wanderers?

### INDIVIDUAL UNIT AREAS

- ☐ Are different sizes and types of units available? Are units single or double occupancy?
- ☐ Are the rooms clean, safe and adequate?
- ☐ What pieces of furniture are provided?  
Is there a rental fee for items provided?
- ☐ Can you bring some of your own furniture or other personal items?
- ☐ Is there a way to get furniture donated for your room if you don't own any?
- ☐ Are there arrangements made to help you move your belongings in/out?
- ☐ If this unit is a shared room, how are roommates selected?
- ☐ Is there storage space available?
- ☐ Is there access to temperature control within the room?
- ☐ Do units have their own lockable doors?
- ☐ Do units have a telephone or cable TV?  
How is billing handled?
- ☐ Are there shared bathrooms? If so, how many residents are there per bath?
- ☐ Is there a sit-down shower?
- ☐ Are there fire sprinklers and smoke alarms installed?
- ☐ Are kitchenettes available? May residents keep food in their units?
- ☐ Is there a 24-hour emergency call system available?
- ☐ Is there a sufficient level of privacy?

## Staffing

- ☐ Can you speak with the staff members who will be providing direct care?
- ☐ Who will provide personal care?  
Nursing care?
- ☐ What language(s) do staff members speak?
- ☐ Who has the most daily interaction with the residents?
- ☐ When is a registered nurse (RN) on the premises?
- ☐ How many nurses aides are available at different times of the day?
- ☐ What is the staff ratio per resident?
- ☐ Do aides handle all job functions within the residence (assistance with bathing and/or dressing, dining, light housekeeping) or are their jobs defined to more specific activities?

- ❑ Is there a security system in place?
- ❑ What is the employee turnover rate?
- ❑ What training and qualifications are required of all employees?
- ❑ Is the staff caring, cheerful and attentive to resident needs?

## Services

- ❑ Can the residence provide a list of basic services?
- ❑ Are doctors, nurses and emergency assistance available if needed?
- ❑ What is the procedure for responding to a resident's medical emergency?
- ❑ How will specialized services, such as physical therapy and occupational therapy, be arranged?
- ❑ Are pharmacy services offered on-site? What are the policies regarding storage of medication, assistance with medication, training and supervision of staff?
- ❑ Is self-administration of medications allowed? How is it monitored?

## Emergency Procedures

- ❑ Are emergency/evacuation procedures clearly posted throughout the facility?
- ❑ Does staff know what the procedures are? Are there practice drills, when?

## House Policies

- ❑ What is included in the statement of Resident's Rights and Responsibilities?
- ❑ What are the policies regarding visitors and pets?
- ❑ Are there accommodations for guests to visit or stay over?
- ❑ Are pets allowed in the residence, what types? Who is responsible for their care?
- ❑ Can residents be absent from the facility? For what reasons and for how long?

## Activities

- ❑ What type of activities are offered and when?
- ❑ How are the residents notified of available activities?
- ❑ Will staff plan for resident's activities, such as hair appointments or social gatherings?
- ❑ Will you and/or your loved one be able to attend religious services of your choice?

## Transportation

Attempt to view the vehicle and ask if it is handicap accessible, air conditioned, and maintained regularly.

- ❑ Is transportation available to activities outside of the residence?
- ❑ Is there a limit to the distance that transportation is offered and the type of trip for which transportation is available?
- ❑ Are trips scheduled on a limited basis or are they available regularly?
- ❑ Can residents arrange transportation on short notice?
- ❑ Is transportation arranged by the resident or a staff member?
- ❑ Is there a charge per trip? If so, in what case and how much?

## Meals

Be sure to make at least one visit during a scheduled mealtime and arrange to sample a meal if possible.

- ❑ Is the food pleasing, nutritious, adequate and attractively served?
- ❑ Are there specific meal times, or can you snack throughout the day or evening?
- ❑ Must everyone eat at the same time or is the facility flexible?
- ❑ Is seating assigned? If so, what arrangements are in place for residents to change and sit with others?
- ❑ Does the menu allow for choices at each meal?
- ❑ How do the residents make their selection? At mealtime or the day before?
- ❑ Can residents request special meals?

## Meals *(Continued)*


- ☐ Will the facility meet your dietary or cultural food preferences?
- ☐ Does someone check on a resident if he or she does not attend a meal?
- ☐ Is there help available to assist a resident to the dining room?
- ☐ Are wheelchairs and walkers permitted in the dining area?
- ☐ Is a resident able to have trays sent to his/her room in case of an illness?
- ☐ Can residents receive help cutting food or feeding themselves?
- ☐ Are private dining areas available?
- ☐ Are guest meals available?
- ☐ Can residents have alcoholic beverages?

## Other Questions

- ☐ How is a discharge from the facility determined?
- ☐ How often and by whom are the care plans completed? How often does the record keeping or documentation occur?
- ☐ How involved are families? What are the steps taken to encourage family members to visit residents and participate in their care?
- ☐ What if a resident has no immediate family available for support? Who will be able to assist him/her with tasks such as letter writing?
- ☐ If a resident is admitted to a hospital, what will happen to their room and what will it cost?
- ☐ What are the complaint, suggestion or grievance procedures at the facility?
- ☐ Who licenses/funds the facility and how can you contact that agency?

## Visit the Facility More Than Once

You should consider visiting one day unannounced and then again at a scheduled time, when you have made an appointment to speak with a representative. You may also find that spending some extra time around the facility and observing the daily routines will give you a better idea of what it would be like to live there.

 **FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CHOOSING A FACILITY, PLEASE CONTACT THESE RESOURCES:**

**THE COUNTY OFFICE ON AGING/  
STATE INFORMATION HOTLINE**  
NJASE: 1.877.222.3737

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH & SENIOR SERVICES  
DIVISION OF AGING &  
COMMUNITY SERVICES**  
P.O. Box 807  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0807  
1.800.792.8820 (toll-free for  
NJ residents only)

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF  
HUMAN SERVICES  
DIVISION OF DISABILITY SERVICES**  
222 South Warren Street  
P.O. Box 700  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0700  
1.888.285.3036 (toll-free)  
609.292.7800  
609.292.1210 (TDD)  
[www.state.nj.us/human  
services/dds](http://www.state.nj.us/human/services/dds)

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For more information or additional copies please contact New Jersey EASE (Easy Access Single Entry), toll-free at 1.877.222.3737, the State's Senior Services Helpline at 1.800.792.8820 (out of state callers: 1.877.222.3737), or visit the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services Website at [www.state.nj.us/health/seniors.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/health/seniors.htm).

State of New Jersey | Richard J. Codey, Acting Governor  
Department of Health and Senior Services | Fred M. Jacobs,  
M.D., J.D., Commissioner

Department of Health and Senior Services Division of Aging and  
Community Services  
P.O. Box 807 Trenton, NJ 08625-0807

